

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FOR STATE AND AGRICULTURE

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SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN PRESS REACTION TO MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

REF: CANBERRA 0014

1. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM IN THE AUSTRALIAN PRESS ABOUT THE US DECISION TO RESTRICT MEAT IMPORTS IN 1975. THE FIRST STRONG PRESS STATEMENT WAS MADE BY FRANK CREAN, MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS TRADE. HIS PRESS STATEMENT WAS AS FOLLOWS:

QTE AUSTRALIA WAS EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS AGAIN MOVING TO RESTRICT IMPORTS OF MEAT TO ITS MARKET.

QTE MR. CREAN SAID THIS WHEN COMMENTING ON A STATEMENT ISSUED IN WASHINGTON BY THE UNITED STATES ACTING SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, MR. J. PHIL CAMPBELL THAT UNITED STATES IMPORTS OF MEAT WOULD BE RESTRICTED IN 1975. MR. CREAN ADDED THAT THE UNITED STATES ACTION

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IN INTRODUCING RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTS OF MEAT WAS

ESPECIALLY DISAPPOINTING AS IT FOLLOWED CLOSELY ON THE PASSAGE BY CONGRESS OF THE TRADE REFORM BILL. THIS LATEST ACTION HARDLY SEEMS CONSISTENT WITH THE APPROACH THE UNITED STATES HAD ADOPTED IN CALLING ON ITS TRADING PARTNERS TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO TRADE. QTE EXPLAINING THAT AUSTRALIA SUPPLIED MORE THAN HALF OF THE UNITED STATES MEAT IMPORTS, MR. CREAN RECALLED THAT RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO THE UNITED STATES MARKET HAD BEEN APPLIED FROM LATE 1968 TO MID 1972. SINCE THAT TIME THEY HAD BEEN SUSPENDED BY THE EXERCISE OF PRESIDENTIAL DISCRETIONARY POWER TO MEET THE GROWING UNITED STATES DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS FOR BEEF. QTE MR. CREAN SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS INDICATED AN EXPECTATION THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE A CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH TO THE QUESTION OF ACCESS TO THE UNITED STATES MARKET IN 1975. FOR ITS PART, AUSTRALIA HAD ALWAYS SUPPORTED ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE A COOPERATIVE APPROACH AMONG IMPORTING AND EXPORTING COUNTRIES TO ENSURE TRADE WAS ABLE TO PROCEED ON A FAIR AND REASONABLE AS WELL AS A PREDICTABLE BASIS. MR. CREAN SAID HE HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE UNITED STATES ON MEAT THAT WERE EQUITABLE TO THE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY. QTE GIVEN THAT THE PROBLEMS OF THE UNITED STATES BEEF INDUSTRY WERE ESSENTIALLY A RESULT OF FACTORS OTHER THAN IMPORTS, HE WAS CONCERNED THAT, ON THE FIGURES GIVEN IN MR. CAMPBELL'S STATEMENT, THE UNITED STATES APPEAR TO BE SEEKING TO PASS ON AN UNDUE BURDEN OF ITS PROBLEM TO OVERSEAS SUPPLIERS. QTE MR. CREAN RECALLED THE ASSISTANCE AUSTRALIA HAD GIVEN THE UNITED STATES IN 1972 IN STEPPING UP SHIPMENTS OF MEAT IN RESPONSE TO UNITED STATES CALLS FOR MORE MEAT IMPORTS. NOW THAT THE AUSTRALIAN BEEF INDUSTRY WAS ENCOUNTERING REAL DIFFICULTIES, HE EXPECTED THAT PARTICULAR REGARD WOULD BE PLACED BY THE UNITED STATES ON THE EFFORTS MADE AT THAT TIME DESPITE THE DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES THIS CAUSED WITHIN AUSTRALIA AND THE PRESSURES THAT THEN EXISTED TO LIMIT AUSTRALIAN EXPORTS OF BEEF. QTE THE MINISTER CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT THE AUSTRALIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT, WHICH WAS IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE INDUSTRY, WOULD BE CONSIDERING APPROACHES MADE TO AUSTRALIA BY THE UNITED STATES ON THE QUESTION OF MEAT EXPORTS TO THE UNITED STATES. HE WOULD ALSO BE TAKING UP THE QUESTION OF ACCESS TO THE UNITED STATES MARKET IN 1975 IN HIS FORTHCOMING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES IN WASHINGTON EARLY IN JANUARY. END QTE.

3. ALTHOUGH CREAN'S STATEMENT WAS STRONG, IT WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE MODEST THAN SOME. THE AUSTRALIAN CARRIED AN ARTICLE SAYING THAT AUSTRALIAN BEEF EXPORTERS WOULD DEFY U.S. CLAIMS FOR RESTRAINTS AND CONTINUE TO SELL ON ADVANCE ORDERS UNTIL THE SHIPS WERE ACTUALLY REJECTED AT THE PORTS. THE MEAT BOARD LABELED THIS TALK AS "BUNK" AND TOLD US THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD COMPLY WHEN THE QUANTITY WAS AGREED UPON BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. THE MEAT BOARD IS SET UP TO HANDLE THE PROGRAM.

4. GOA OFFICIALS HERE SAY THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ANTICIPATED THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON CONTROLS OF MEAT IMPORTS, THEY WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT THERE WERE NOT MORE PRIOR CONSULTATIONS. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DETERMINE WHAT STRATEGY GOA OFFICIALS ARE PREPARING FOR CREAN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, BUT IT IS EXPECTED THAT HE WILL ATTEMPT TO GET A MORE FAVORABLE QUOTA. IN OUR EARLIER TALKS, INDUSTRY LEADERS HAD TALKED OF HOLDING OUT FOR 300,000 MT. WE HAVE BEEN URGING A SPEEDY SETTLEMENT IN ORDER TO AVOID STIRRING UP THE U.S. BEEF CATTLE INDUSTRY. GREEN

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